



PRESS RELEASE
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For Immediate Release

April 24, 2003

**PORT ORANGE MAN INDICTED FOR STEALING
SPACE SHUTTLE COLUMBIA DEBRIS**

ORLANDO - United States Attorney Paul I. Perez today announced the indictment of MICHAEL TIMOTHY PANKIEWICKZ, age 44, of Port Orange, Florida, charging him with stealing government property in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 641, transporting stolen goods across state lines in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 2314, and making false statements in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1001. Counts One and Three each carry a maximum term of imprisonment of ten years, a fine of \$250,000.00, a term of supervised release of three years, and a special assessment of \$100.00. Count Two carries a maximum term of imprisonment of five years, a fine of \$250,000.00, a term of supervised release of one year, and a special assessment of \$100.00.

According to the indictment, the National Aeronautical and Space Administration ("NASA") employed MICHAEL TIMOTHY PANKIEWICKZ and selected him to travel to Texas to assist in recovering debris from the space shuttle Columbia, which was destroyed as it attempted to re-enter Earth's atmosphere on February 1, 2003. The indictment

charges that MICHAEL TIMOTHY PANKIEWICKZ removed debris from the debris field in eastern Texas without NASA's permission and transported the debris to the Middle District of Florida. In addition, the indictment charges that MICHAEL TIMOTHY PANKIEWICKZ made false statements to NASA Office of the Inspector General agents regarding NASA property that he removed, without permission, from the John F. Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Florida.

This case was investigated by Special Agent William M. Forrester of the National Aeronautical and Space Administration, Office of the Inspector General, and is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Vincent A. Citro.

An indictment is merely a formal charge that a defendant has committed a violation of the federal criminal laws, and every defendant is presumed innocent until, and unless, proven guilty.